

Safe Behaviours

National Child Safe Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

At the Y, the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people are our highest priority and the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and behaviours. Safeguarding is how we lead and how we work. Every child and young person has the right to *feel safe and be safe* in all Y environments, programs and activities.

Children and young people have the right to be safe, feel safe, be respected, be heard and participate in environments free from harm and abuse. We know children and young people thrive when they are safe, included and supported to grow.

This Safe Behaviours Code of Conduct gives practical effect to the Y's National Safeguarding Policy Framework. It sets the Y's minimum national safe behaviour expectations to prevent harm and abuse, uphold the rights and dignity of children and young people, maintain clear professional boundaries, and actively create child safe cultures.

This Code makes clear the safe behaviours expected of all Y People when working with or around children and young people. It supports consistent decision-making, early identification of risk, and fair, transparent responses when conduct does not meet these expectations.

This Code establishes the Y's minimum national safe behaviour expectations. It is given effect through locally compliant policies, procedures and systems, which must maintain the intent and standards set out in this Code.

All Y People are required to understand, comply with and uphold this Code whenever acting in their role, performing duties, representing the Y, or engaging in conduct that may impact the safety, wellbeing or rights of children and young people.

Clear safe behaviour expectations are important because they help prevent harm, guide everyday practice, support consistent decision-making, and provide a fair and transparent basis for addressing conduct that does not meet these expectations.

The Y is committed to fostering psychologically safe environments where concerns can be raised openly, respectfully and without fear of retaliation.

This Code supports compliance with applicable Commonwealth, state and territory laws, child safe standards, mandatory reporting obligations, work health and safety duties, privacy obligations, employment obligations and, where applicable, the National Quality Framework.

This Code must be read and applied alongside the National Safeguarding Policy Framework, applicable laws, and the local policies, procedures and systems that govern how safe behaviours are put into practice in each Association.

2. Scope

This Code applies to Y Australia, all Member Y Associations and entities, and all Y People, including:

- Board Directors
- employees
- volunteers
- contractors
- consultants
- students on placement
- labour hire or agency workers
- any other person engaged by, or representing, the Y in any capacity

It applies across all Y programs, services, facilities, community settings, activities, excursions, transport, digital environments and online interactions.

This includes camps, residential or overnight programs, travel, conferences, events and third-party venues used for Y activities.

This Code is primarily focused on safeguarding children and young people. References to adults at risk are included to support safe practice where relevant and do not replace the need for locally compliant adult safeguarding policies.

Consistent with the National Safeguarding Policy Framework, this Code sets the Y's minimum national safe behaviour expectations for the Y Movement. Member Associations may reflect these expectations in their own locally compliant codes of conduct or other local instruments, provided the expectations in this Code are met or exceeded.

3. Individual Responsibilities

All Y People must:

- read, understand and comply with this Code
- complete required induction, safeguarding and refresher training
- follow the policies, procedures, supervision arrangements and lawful directions that apply to their role and setting
- seek guidance where expectations are unclear or risks arise
- act honestly, professionally and with integrity
- raise concerns promptly, honestly and in good faith, even where doing so may feel uncomfortable or involve senior individuals
- intervene, redirect or escalate when unsafe behaviour, practices or environments are observed
- never conceal, minimise or intentionally fail to disclose safeguarding concerns, conflicts of interest or conduct that may place children or young people at risk
- cooperate with reviews, investigations, audits and safeguarding processes
- model behaviour consistent with the values of the Y
- never discourage, prevent or control a child, young person, family member or colleague from raising a concern, making a complaint or seeking help
- understand that compliance with this Code is a condition of engagement with the Y.

Leaders and supervisors must promote compliance, address concerns, support staff capability and respond to breaches in line with applicable law and local policies, procedures and systems.

4. Safe Behaviours Expected at the Y

At the Y, all Y People must model safe, respectful and professional behaviour and contribute to environments where children and young people feel safe, valued, included and able to grow.

These safe behaviours are the Y's minimum national safe behaviour expectations. They apply across the Y Movement whenever a person is acting in a Y role. Local policies, procedures and systems govern how these expectations are put into practice in each Association.

In this section, references to local policies, procedures and systems include the local requirements, controls, supervision and authorisations that apply in your Y Association.

4.1 Listen, Respect and Empower Children and Young People

Children and young people are safer when they are heard, respected, informed and empowered to participate in decisions that affect them.

Y People must:

- listen actively and respectfully to children and young people
- hear what they have to say, no matter how big or small the issue may seem
- take concerns, disclosures, worries and feedback seriously
- support children and young people to express views, make choices and ask questions
- involve children and young people in decisions that affect them in ways they can understand and participate in meaningfully
- communicate in ways children and young people can understand, that are inclusive and culturally responsive
- respond without ridicule, dismissal, blame or shame
- recognise that behaviour may be a form of communication
- explain, in ways they can understand, how children and young people can get help, available supports, raise a concern or make a complaint
- support children and young people to speak up, raise concerns and seek help, and respond respectfully when they do

4.2 Put Safety First

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people must take priority in decisions, actions and responses.

Y People must:

- place the safety and wellbeing of children and young people ahead of convenience, operational pressure, relationships, reputation or organisational impact
- act promptly where something seems wrong or a child may be unsafe
- take action to prevent foreseeable harm, abuse or neglect
- follow the supervision, ratio, safeguarding and risk management requirements that apply to the activity and setting
- review risks and apply required controls whenever circumstances change
- maintain safe environments, equipment and practices within their control
- act without delay when a child or young person may be at risk, even where there may be concerns about reputation, relationships, inconvenience or organisational impact
- keep children and young people safe in physical, digital and online environments
- comply with lawful directions, procedures and safety controls
- escalate immediate risks without delay

4.3 Create Safe, Inclusive and Respectful Environments

Inclusive, respectful and culturally safe environments help children and young people feel welcome, valued and able to participate.

Y People must:

- treat every child and young person with dignity, fairness and respect
- create welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe environments
- respect culture, identity, language, disability, gender and sexuality diversity
- actively challenge bullying, racism, discrimination, exclusion or humiliation
- use language and behaviour that supports belonging, wellbeing and participation
- model respectful behaviour for children, young people and others
- contribute to a culture where concerns can be raised safely
- provide communication support, accessibility support and adjustments required for children and young people to participate safely and meaningfully

4.4 Maintain Professional Boundaries

Clear professional boundaries help prevent misconduct, reduce risk and maintain safe relationships.

Y People must:

- maintain clear, safe and professional boundaries at all times
- use their role responsibly and never misuse power, trust or influence
- provide support without creating dependency, secrecy or inappropriate closeness
- treat children and young people consistently and fairly, without creating favouritism, dependency or exclusivity
- ensure one-to-one interactions are authorised where required, observable or otherwise safeguarded, and consistent with local policies, procedures and systems
- ensure transport of children or young people is authorised, necessary for the role, and managed in line with local policies, procedures and systems
- maintain contact with children and young people only through approved Y programs, services or activities, unless another arrangement is authorised under local policies, procedures and systems
- never use a child or young person to meet personal or emotional needs
- never ask a child or young person to keep secrets about interactions, communication or behaviour
- maintain openness and transparency in interactions and communication with children and young people
- use physical contact only when required for safety, care or the activity, and only when it is observable and consistent with local policies, procedures and systems

- raise boundary concerns or inappropriate conduct promptly in line with local policies, procedures and systems

4.5 Use Safe Communication and Technology

Safe communication and technology practices support transparency, privacy and online safety.

Y People must:

- use only the systems, devices and platforms authorised under local policies, procedures and systems when communicating with children and young people
- communicate only for legitimate Y purposes
- use respectful, professional communication that children and young people can understand at all times
- maintain clear professional boundaries in digital environments
- obtain required consent for images, recordings and digital engagement
- include parents, guardians or carers in communication when required by law or local policies, procedures and systems
- maintain transparency and organisational oversight in digital communication
- protect accounts, passwords and access credentials
- not follow, friend, add or communicate with children or young people through personal social media or other personal online accounts unless this is permitted under local policies, procedures and systems
- disappearing, encrypted or private messaging functions must not be used to communicate with children or young people unless this is expressly permitted under local policies, procedures and systems and supported by appropriate safeguards
- report unsafe online behaviour, boundary breaches or inappropriate contact promptly in line with local policies, procedures and systems
- keep digital communication transparent, professional and consistent with local policies, procedures and systems
- use group chats, pages, forums or gaming chat involving children or families only where these are authorised and managed under local policies, procedures and systems for Y-related communication

4.6 Protect Privacy and Information

Protecting information supports dignity, safety and legal compliance.

Y People must:

- respect privacy and handle personal information lawfully and carefully
- collect, use and share information only when permitted by law and local policies, procedures and systems and only to the extent necessary
- obtain consent before using images, recordings or personal information whenever consent is required by law or local policies, procedures and systems

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- store, access and dispose of records securely
- maintain confidentiality unless disclosure is required by law, required for safety, or in line with local policies, procedures and systems
- make accurate and timely records in line with local policies, procedures and systems
- verify identity before sharing sensitive information

4.7 Recognise, Respond and Report Concerns

Prompt recognition, response and reporting helps protect children and young people and supports accountability.

Y People must:

- be alert to signs that a child or young person may be experiencing harm, abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation
- notice changes in behaviour, presentation or wellbeing that may indicate concern
- identify and raise concerns early where patterns of behaviour, boundary breaches, secrecy, favouritism, isolation or manipulation may indicate grooming or unsafe conduct
- respond calmly, supportively and in line with safeguarding requirements to disclosures or concerns
- explain clearly when information must be shared to help keep a child or young person safe, in line with law and local policies, procedures and systems
- ensure immediate safety where there is urgent risk
- report concerns in line with local policies, procedures and systems and ensure all mandatory reporting obligations are met
- make reports honestly, promptly and in good faith
- record concerns accurately, objectively and promptly in line with local policies, procedures and systems
- escalate concerns without delay if action is not taken, if the response is inadequate, or if a child or young person may remain at risk
- cooperate fully with safeguarding, regulatory or investigative processes
- preserve relevant information or evidence in line with law and local policies, procedures and systems
- never ignore, minimise, delay or suppress a child safety concern

4.8 Support Safe Participation

Children and young people benefit when adults encourage participation, confidence and independence safely and consistently with local policies, procedures and systems.

Y People must:

- encourage children and young people fairly, safely and without favouritism
- support choices, participation and independence in ways children and young people can manage safely
- support children and young people to build confidence and independence in ways that are safe and consistent with local policies, procedures and systems
- provide encouragement, feedback and guidance that is respectful, clear and consistent with the child or young person's needs
- set realistic expectations and celebrate effort and progress

5. Behaviour That Is Not Acceptable at the Y

Y People must not engage in behaviour that places children or young people at risk, breaches professional boundaries, undermines safety, or is inconsistent with child safety, lawful directions or the values of the Y.

The behaviours set out below describe conduct that is always unacceptable because it places children or young people at risk. These behaviours must never occur, regardless of role, intent or circumstances.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- causing harm or abuse to a child or young person
- using harsh, degrading, humiliating, intimidating or threatening behaviour
- misusing power, trust or authority
- engaging in grooming behaviour, including any pattern of behaviour intended to build trust, isolate, manipulate, exploit or prepare a child or young person for abuse
- showing favouritism through gifts, money, favours, special treatment, exclusive attention or privileges that are not required for the role.
- being alone with a child or young person when this is prohibited or when required controls are not in place
- transporting a child or young person without authorisation from your Y
- communicating with children or young people through personal phones, private messaging apps, personal email, gaming chat or social media when this is not permitted by local policies, procedures and systems
- photographing, recording or sharing images without approval or required consent
- engaging in bullying, harassment, coercive, controlling, exploitative, racist, discriminatory or sexually inappropriate behaviour or language, including behaviour between children where a safeguarding response is required
- consuming alcohol or drugs while responsible for children
- ignoring, minimising, suppressing or failing to report a concern or disclosure
- knowingly making false or malicious reports

- retaliating against, intimidating, disadvantaging or attempting to silence a person who raises a concern, complaint or safeguarding issue
- destroying, concealing or altering relevant records or information
- breaching lawful directions, procedures or professional boundaries
- sleeping in the same bed or room as a child or young person
- using a child or young person for emotional support or personal validation
- sharing, showing or exposing children or young people to sexual, explicit or otherwise inappropriate content
- engaging in sexualised comments, jokes, behaviour or discussions with or around children and young people
- creating, possessing or sharing manipulated, artificial intelligence-generated or unauthorised digital content involving children or young people

Breaches of this Code will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary, contractual, volunteer, regulatory or law enforcement action, depending on the nature of the conduct.

6. Speak Up

Speaking up is a core safeguarding expectation at the Y and a critical part of our child safe culture.

All Y People must promptly raise concerns about:

- child safety risks
- conduct inconsistent with this Code
- suspected harm, abuse or neglect
- unsafe practices or environments
- breaches of local safeguarding policies, procedures or systems

Speaking up is expected, supported and taken seriously. People who raise concerns in good faith will be supported and must not be subject to victimisation, retaliation or disadvantage for speaking up.

Y People must cooperate with lawful directions, investigations and local safeguarding policies, procedures and systems.

Silence, inaction or prioritising comfort, hierarchy or reputation over safety is inconsistent with the Y's safeguarding expectations.

7. Review

This Code will be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier in response to legislative reform, serious incidents, emerging risks, safeguarding concerns or organisational learning.

Feedback from children and young people, families, Member Y Associations and Y People will inform future review, alongside learning from incidents, complaints, concerns, audits and legislative change.